specialised area of transfusion medicine in neonatology.

Edge's chapter on cerebral oedema in diabetic ketoacidosis highlights the difficulties in initially recognising the onset of this life threatening condition. However, she clearly stresses early warning signs such as headache and emphasises the importance of meticulous nursing care in these vulnerable young people. She recommends the useful consensus statement on management available from the British Society of Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes and offers useful key points for clinical practices such as delaying insulin treatment for at least an hour after starting fluids.

Titus K Ninan provides a good review of a difficult topic in his chapter on 'brittle asthma'. It is clearly pitched at the general paediatrician. He discusses conditions that might masquerade as asthma and factors that may contribute to loss of control in asthma using clear lists and text boxes. Therapy options are discussed and also thresholds for referral for a tertiary respiratory opinion, useful guidance for primary care physicians.

Many primary care doctors will find the chapter on ADHD helpful. It provides a succinct overview of the condition with diagnostic criteria and suggested therapies. Importantly, Rappley considers mental health conditions that could mimic or co-exist with ADHD. The only drawback for UK doctors is the use of the DSM IV subtype criteria rather than ICD 10. However, clear clinical descriptions of the diagnostic criteria should avoid confusion.

This book refreshed my knowledge on less common conditions such as autoimmune brain disorders and lupus. The chapter on medication errors is a worthwhile read for all doctors. The literature reviews accompanying each chapter were good on the whole. The final literature review dated from 2004 which was a little disappointing as the book has gone to press in 2006 nevertheless it is a useful quick reference for topics such as infant feeding, child abuse and screening. Overall a worthwhile read providing easy to follow comprehensive reviews.

Claire T Lundy

Oxford Handbook of Clinical Diagnosis Huw Llewelyn, Hock Aun Ang, Keir E Lewis, Anees Al-Abdullah. Oxford University Press, Oxford UK. October 2005. 704pp £22-95. ISBN 0-19-263249-3.

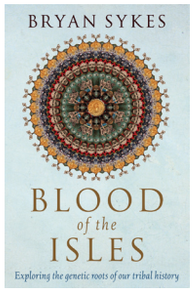
The 'handbook' title implies a pithy, accessible, easily-carried, essential element of the houseman's arsenal. While the book was useful at ward level, it was in more of a reference role than as a crucial bedside tool.

It is well structured. It is divided into three main sections, with lists of differential diagnoses associated with particular symptoms, signs and abnormal investigative findings. It was most useful in formulating an extended differential in the complex patient; and as a guide to further investigation. The section on the chest x-ray was excellent, providing succinct descriptions and exhaustive explanations for a range of chest film abnormalities.

The book would be a beneficial addition to any medical ward either at the nurses' station or in the doctors' office. It offers a different perspective to most of the other pocket books on the market. However, it does not provide fundamental information critical to daily beside decision-making. We would recommend this book for consultation at ward level but not as an indispensable purchase for every junior doctor.

AS Fitzpatrick, Marshall Riley

The Blood of the Isles. Bryan Sykes. Bantam Press. September 2006. 400pp. £17.99 ISBN: 0-593056523



The human quest for our origins is as old as our species itself. It has spawned all sorts of crazy theories and legends, from the idyllic fantasies of the Garden of Eden and Noah's Ark, to the mythical Aryan racism that fuelled Nazi Germany and still persists in some quarters. The genetic history of Great Britain, Ireland, and nearby islands ("The Isles" of Professor Sykes's title) is itself associated with strong emotions, contradictory legends, and imagined histories, which may or may not have any basis in fact. Bryan Sykes is something of a legend himself - a distinguished clinical geneticist and expert on collagen disorders, he turned his hand to "genetic archaeology" - the study of ancient and modern populations by unpicking the discrete and information-laden sequences of the genes they carry.

In Sykes's first foray into the popularisation of this approach, he wrote "The Seven Daughters of Eve", a fascinating romp through the history of our maternal genetics. The reader will be familiar with the cellular role and characteristics of mitochondria, but their particular value to the genetic archaeologist lies in the property that they contain their own DNA (they are the evolutionary relics of once-free-living bacteria that engaged in a highly significant and successful alliance with the ancestors of all eukaryotic cells), and this DNA is exclusively maternally inherited. The logical upshot of this is that your mitochondrial DNA is inherited from your mother, who got it from her mother, and so on, right back through human history and prehistory - indeed back through our common ancestors with the other great apes, other primates, mammals, vertebrates, and to the very first proper eukaryotic cell itself. Although this is perhaps obvious, it is nonetheless an arresting thought, and one that clearly appeals to Sykes. Motherhood, right back to when we diverged from apple pie.

A similar principle (this time following the male line exclusively) applies to the Y chromosome, the scrappy little chunk of DNA that is really only responsible for conferring maleness to an embryo that would otherwise follow a female developmental trajectory. In "Adam's Curse", Sykes re-worked "Seven Daughters of Eve" for the boys, and identified five patriarchal "clans" to add to the seven matriarchal ones he had identified as contributing to the vast majority of extant Europeans.

The differing activities and proclivities of males and females over the ages mean that Y-chromosomal DNA and mitochondrial DNA allow us to open a window on population histories, and put some flesh on the bare bones of legend and myth. Perhaps surprisingly, this approach is bearing significant fruit, some of which borders on the shocking. In 2003, Zerjal *et al.* reported an astonishingly high carriage rate of a recent Y-chromosome signature across the old Mongol empire - up to 8% of the Y-chromosomes appeared to show an origin from around the time of Genghis Khan - the tempting inference (which may well be correct) is that this is the genetic legacy of Genghis himself. He and his descendants were well known for their sexual voracity, and association with the ruling family would have boosted their reproductive luck somewhat.

Dan Bradley and colleagues in Trinity College Dublin have uncovered a similar "Genghis effect" apparently originating in early medieval north-west Ireland, associated with surnames connected with the *Ui Neill*, descendants of the family of the infamous Niall of the Nine Hostages. Niall's most remembered exploit was the capture of the young Roman Briton Succath, later to become St Patrick. So it's all his fault (Moore *et al.*, 2006).

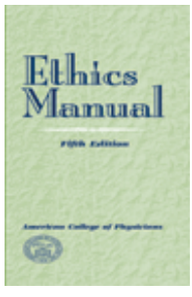
The genes seem to fit with the story, and using these principles, Sykes sets out on a genetic journey across the four regions of the Isles (England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland), revealing the genetic signatures of the various postulated waves of conquest, immigration, raiding, etc., from the original Mesolithic colonisers of the land, to later arrivals, including Romans, Vikings, Saxons, Normans, and other assorted peoples. The detailed unpicking of the results makes fascinating reading, but the conclusion (and I hope the reader doesn't mind a bit of a "spoiler") is that the genetic signature of the original inhabitants of the Isles (who may be equated with the "Celts", albeit not genetically connected with the Celts of Europe) remains very strong - indeed vastly predominant. The conquests were primarily cultural, with much less displacement of the original populations than was previously assumed. This may well be a general principle in history, and the tales of large scale exoduses and migrations of entire populations may be a tad hyperbolic. Results from other populations will undoubtedly spark future debates.

"Blood of the Isles" is written in a similar tone to Sykes's other books, and as such it is very readable and enjoyable. The detailed genetic analysis is skimmed over, which might leave the author open to a charge of "dumbing down"; the non-technical reader, on the other hand, will probably welcome this. Occasionally the gushing references to the emotion of the whole enterprise are slightly overplayed, and certain parts of the text are a bit repetitive (or derived from the previous books). However, this does not detract from a rollicking and entertaining jaunt through the history of our little corner of Europe, in the pursuit of that most fundamental of questions: "Who are we?"

Zerjal *et al*. The Genetic Legacy of the Mongols. *Am J Hum Genet* 2003;**72:**717-721.

Moore *et al.* A Y-chromosome signature of hegemony in Gaelic Ireland. *Am J Hum Genet* 2006;**78**:334-338

Shane McKee



Ethics Manual 5th Edition Lois Snyder, Cathy Leffler. Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd, London. May 2006, 54pp, £8.95. ISBN 1-930513-65-8.

The 5th Edition of the Ethics Manual is a very well referenced (117 references) and updated summary of professional ethics in medical practice. It attempts a truly comprehensive insight into ethics from confidentiality through consent to genetic testing as would be expected from such a manual. More unusually it touches briefly on good practice as applied to Disability Certification, boundaries and privacy and gifts from patients. Slightly more detail is applied to end-of-life decision making but again attempts to cover the entire range of dilemmas including DNR, artificial nutrition, advance care planning etc.

In reality the Ethics Manual will be of interest only to those intending to practice medicine in the USA or those who wish to study practice across the Atlantic. Not unexpectedly the four-principles (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice) are central to the manual. However the legal and societal context ensures that the manual is of little appeal to UK or Irish doctors. A further indictment is the lack of detail in any of the myriad complex topics. Research ethics is covered in three pages!

Doctors seeking general knowledge in medical ethics can access a number of useful and very readable paperbacks published in the UK. Those seeking detailed ethical analysis in specific areas will have to be more diligent in their search but I am afraid that this publication will be unhelpful.

Bob Taylor